

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

The listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings of claims in the application:

LISTING OF THE CLAIMS

1. (Original) A rotary tubular kiln comprising:
a heating tunnel wall defining an interior heating tunnel;
an externally heatable, rotatable tube disposed within and generally surrounded by said heating tunnel wall, said rotatable tube defining an outer surface;
a longitudinal sealing member disposed within said interior heating tunnel, said sealing member extending between said tunnel wall and said outer surface of said rotatable tube, said sealing member positioned within said interior heating tunnel to define an entry side and an exit side of said interior heating tunnel, said sealing member including (i) a rigid portion positioned at a distance from said rotating tube, and (ii) a flexible portion positioned adjacent to said outer surface of said rotating tube.
2. (Original) The rotary tubular kiln according to claim 1 wherein said tunnel wall is bowl-shaped.
3. (Original) The rotary tubular kiln according to claim 1 wherein said sealing member is disposed below said rotatable tube.
4. (Original) The rotary tubular kiln according to claim 1, wherein said rigid portion comprises a refractory material.
5. (Original) The rotary tubular kiln according to claim 1, wherein said flexible portion comprises ceramic fibers.
6. (Original) The rotary tubular kiln according to claim 1, wherein said flexible portion includes a plurality of strips.

7. (Original) The rotary tubular kiln according to claim 6 wherein at least a portion of said plurality of strips are joined to one another.

8. (Currently Amended) A rotary tubular kiln comprising:
a heating tunnel wall defining an interior heating tunnel;
an externally heatable, rotatable tube disposed within and generally
surrounded by said heating tunnel wall, said rotatable tube defining an outer surface;
a longitudinal sealing member disposed within said interior heating tunnel,
said sealing member extending between said tunnel wall and said outer surface of said
rotatable tube, said sealing member positioned within said interior heating tunnel to define
an entry side and an exit side of said interior heating tunnel, said sealing member including
(i) a rigid portion positioned at a distance from said rotating tube, and (ii) a flexible portion
positioned adjacent to said outer surface of said rotating tube~~The rotary tubular kiln~~
~~according to claim 6 wherein said flexible portion includes a plurality of strips and said~~
~~strips are joined to one another by use of a cement.~~

9. (Original) The rotary tubular kiln according to claim 6 wherein said strips are formed from an elastic and compressible material.

10. (Original) The rotary tubular kiln according to claim 6, wherein at least a portion of said plurality of strips are arranged to form at least one stack of strips.

11. (Original) The rotary tubular kiln according to claim 6 wherein said plurality of strips extend generally perpendicular to the axis of said rotatable tube.

12. (Original) A method for producing a longitudinal sealing member in a rotary tubular kiln, said kiln including (i) a heating tunnel wall defining an interior heating tunnel, and (ii) a rotatable tube disposed within said interior heating tunnel, said method comprising:

forming a wall within said interior heating tunnel, said wall extending generally parallel to a longitudinal axis of said tube, said wall formed from a rigid material;

providing a plurality of flexible strips; and

affixing said plurality of flexible strips to said wall such that said strips are positioned adjacent to an outer surface of said tube.

13. (Original) The method according to claim 12 wherein said plurality of flexible strips are formed from an elastic material.

14. (Currently Amended) A method for producing a longitudinal sealing member in a rotary tubular kiln, said kiln including (i) a heating tunnel wall defining an interior heating tunnel, and (ii) a rotatable tube disposed within said interior heating tunnel, said method comprising:

forming a wall within said interior heating tunnel, said wall extending generally parallel to a longitudinal axis of said tube, said wall formed from a rigid material;

providing a plurality of flexible strips;

affixing said plurality of flexible strips to said wall such that said strips are positioned adjacent to an outer surface of said tube; and ~~The method according to claim 12 further comprising:~~

joining said plurality of flexible strips to one another.

15. (Currently Amended) ~~The method according to claim 12~~ A method for producing a longitudinal sealing member in a rotary tubular kiln, said kiln including (i) a heating tunnel wall defining an interior heating tunnel, and (ii) a rotatable tube disposed within said interior heating tunnel, said method comprising:

forming a wall within said interior heating tunnel, said wall extending generally parallel to a longitudinal axis of said tube, said wall formed from a rigid material;

providing a plurality of flexible strips; and

affixing said plurality of flexible strips to said wall such that said strips are positioned adjacent to an outer surface of said tube wherein said step of affixing is performed by pressing said strips within said wall.

16. (Original) The method according to claim 12 wherein said step of affixing said plurality of strips is performed such that after affixing, said strips extend in a direction generally perpendicular to said longitudinal axis of said tube.

17. (Currently Amended) ~~The method according to claim 16~~ A method for producing a longitudinal sealing member in a rotary tubular kiln, said kiln including (i) a heating tunnel wall defining an interior heating tunnel, and (ii) a rotatable tube disposed within said interior heating tunnel, said method comprising:

forming a wall within said interior heating tunnel, said wall extending generally parallel to a longitudinal axis of said tube, said wall formed from a rigid material;

providing a plurality of flexible strips; and

affixing said plurality of flexible strips to said wall such that said strips are positioned adjacent to an outer surface of said tube wherein said step of affixing said plurality of strips is performed such that after affixing said step of affixing said plurality of strips is performed such that after affixing, said strips extend in a direction generally perpendicular to said longitudinal axis of said tube, and said strips are also compressed in a direction generally parallel to said longitudinal axis of said tube.

18. (New) The rotary tubular kiln according to claim 1 wherein the longitudinal sealing member extends along at least a portion of the length of the heating tunnel wall.

19. (New) The rotary tubular kiln according to claim 1 wherein the longitudinal sealing member extends along the length of the heating tunnel wall.

20. (New) A rotary tubular kiln comprising:

a heating tunnel wall defining an interior heating tunnel;

an externally heatable, rotatable tube disposed within and generally surrounded by said heating tunnel wall, said rotatable tube defining an outer surface;

a longitudinal sealing member disposed within said interior heating tunnel, said sealing member extending between said tunnel wall and said outer surface of said rotatable tube, said sealing member positioned within said interior heating tunnel to define an entry side and an exit side of said interior heating tunnel, said sealing member including (i) a rigid portion comprising a refractory material positioned at a distance from said rotating tube, and (ii) a flexible portion disposed on a distal end of the rigid portion and positioned adjacent to said outer surface of said rotating tube.

21. (New) A rotary tubular kiln comprising:

a heating tunnel wall defining an interior heating tunnel;

an externally heatable, rotatable tube disposed within and generally surrounded by said heating tunnel wall, said rotatable tube defining an outer surface;

a longitudinal sealing member disposed within said interior heating tunnel, said sealing member extending between said tunnel wall and said outer surface of said rotatable tube, said sealing member positioned within said interior heating tunnel to define an entry side and an exit side of said interior heating tunnel, said sealing member including (i) a rigid portion positioned at a distance from said rotating tube, said rigid portion comprising a refractory material, and (ii) a flexible portion positioned adjacent to said outer surface of said rotating tube, said flexible portion comprising ceramic fibers and including a plurality of strips that extend generally perpendicular to the axis of said rotatable tube.

22. (New) A rotary tubular kiln comprising:

a heating tunnel wall defining an interior heating tunnel, said tunnel wall is bowl-shaped;

an externally heatable, rotatable tube disposed within and generally surrounded by said heating tunnel wall, said rotatable tube defining an outer surface;

a longitudinal sealing member disposed within said interior heating tunnel, said sealing member extending between said tunnel wall and said outer surface of said rotatable tube, said sealing member positioned within said interior heating tunnel to define an entry side and an exit side of said interior heating tunnel, said sealing member including (i) a rigid portion positioned at a distance from said rotating tube, and (ii) a flexible portion positioned adjacent to said outer surface of said rotating tube, wherein the rigid portion comprises a brick wall and the flexible portion constitutes a crown disposed on the top of the brick wall.